


Mandela Washington Fellow fights corruption by honoring honest officials

Integrity Idol Mali winners pose with Kondo Moussa (fourth from right) and members of the  Accountability Lab (Courtesy of Integrity Idol Mali)

When corruption is exposed, perpetrators are usually publicly shamed and the government loses trust and credibility. Many wonder who else is guilty and if they will ever be caught.

Kondo Moussa, a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow from Mali, decided to take a different approach to fighting corruption: Have a contest to honor Mali's most honest officials and treat them like rock stars. Moussa had founded the weekly newspaper L'Express de Bamako and was president of the nonprofit organization Giving Back Mali, where he taught leadership skills to young people.

As part of his fellowship, he spent time at the Accountability Lab, which created [Integrity Idol](#), a global grass-roots campaign that celebrates public officials with a proven record of integrity. For the contest, nominees are selected by the public and narrowed down to a final five with the help of an independent panel of experts, culminating in a national radio and television awards ceremony.

Integrity Idol is active in Nigeria, Liberia, Nepal and Pakistan. Moussa told the nonprofit organization IREX that he decided to bring the contest to Mali in hopes of building a national conversation around how to lead with honesty and integrity.

The contest can "create a national conversation about corruption and show the importance of honesty, integrity and personal responsibility in public affairs," he said.

He also felt that focusing on solutions to corruption, instead of the problems, is more effective. Plus, a televised contest honoring integrity would also get people to think more about corruption in their communities.

After five civil servants were chosen for the final in December 2016, the audience voted for military officer Issa Dia as the overall winner. Dia's community initiative LAYIDU provides hundreds of children with venues to learn and play sports together and Integrity Idol said his "devotion to his job and helping his community, as well as his honesty and hard work, make Issa Dia a man of great integrity."

Nominations are already being accepted for the [2017 contest](#), and you can learn more at Integrity Idol Mali's [Facebook page](#). Moussa said he sees his work as "a movement" rather than a set of projects. "We want to help this younger generation of Malians come together and collectively push for the change they want to see. It is a collaborative process, through which we all learn, share, adapt and continue to push for new ways of doing things. That is very powerful," he said.

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